

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed July 31, 2001 in the parent application has been reviewed and carefully considered. Claims 10 and 11 are cancelled. Claim 6 has been amended. Claims 6-8 and 12-13 are pending in this application, with claim 6 being the only independent claim. Reconsideration of the above-identified application, as herein amended and in view of the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action mailed July 31, 2001, claims 6-8 and 12-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by JP 59-92103 (JP '103).

Claims 10 and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over JP '103 in view of in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,657,814 (Maebara).

Before discussing the cited prior art and the Examiner's rejections of the claims in view of that art, a brief summary of the present invention is appropriate. The present invention relates to a process for producing hot-rolled steel strip from a continuously cast precursor strip of a complete casting sequence. The precursor strip is received at a first deformation stage having at least one roll stand directly from a continuous casting plant in which the continuous precursor strip is produced. The precursor strip is rolled through the first deformation stage to form a continuous intermediate strip which is coiled without cutting to form an intermediate coil having an intermediate coil weight comprising at least 40 tons. The continuous intermediate strip is then uncoiled from the intermediate coil and rolled through a second deformation stage having at least one roll stand to form a finished strip. At the output of the second deformation stage, the finished hot strip is severed into sections having a desired finished coil weight to form a plurality of finished

coils strip. The metallurgical characteristics of the continuous intermediate strip are changed to meet desired values by temperature control of the intermediate strip prior to coiling and/or speed control of the intermediate strip during the step of rolling the continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage.

The recitations of "103 ton / 1 strand" and "203 ton/" in the Japanese reference JP 59-92103, without a translation of the context in which these terms are used, do not teach or suggest the claimed limitation which requires that the intermediate coil be at least 40 tons. The Office Action makes specific references to sections of the Japanese text in primary reference JP 59-92103, the abstract of which was cited in the international phase of this national phase application. For example, the Examiner references page 4, col. 2, to illustrate that the coil weight of the intermediate coil disclosed by JP 59-92103 is greater than 40 tons. However, the only Arabic letters and numerals of this section state "103 ton / 1 strand" and "203 ton /". Accordingly, it cannot be determined without a translation what this section actually means. For example, this section may define the weight of the continuous strand S₂ output from the continuous casting plant. Figures 1 and 2 of JP 59-92103 indicate that this strand is severed into several coils SC1 without indicating how heavy each coil is. Accordingly, the terms "103 ton / 1 strand" and "203 ton" alone do not disclose, teach or suggest that the coil SC1 is 203 tons. If a translation is available, applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner provide a copy thereof so that applicant may properly respond to the Examiner's rejection. Please note that the Board of Appeals has recently issued an opinion in which the Board stated that translations are required for foreign documents cited by the Examiner (see *Ex parte Gavin*, 62 USPQ2nd 1680 (BdPatApp&Int, unpub)) and that it is the Examiner's responsibility to provide them. The Abstract of JP 59-92103 was cited in the


International phase of the PCT application. However, the Examiner has cited the actual document and referred to sections of the Japanese text of that document. If a translation is not available, applicant respectfully submits that the mere recitations of "103 ton / 1 strand" and "203 ton/" alone do not teach or suggest the claimed limitation of independent claim 6 which requires that the intermediate coil be at least 40 tons. If the translation is available, applicants respectfully request a copy thereof.

Furthermore, independent claim 6 has been amended to include the limitation "changing the metallurgical characteristics of the continuous intermediate strip by temperature control prior to said step of coiling the continuous intermediate strip and speed control of said continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage". It is respectfully submitted that these limitations are not disclosed by JP 59-92103 which merely discloses a heat insulated box in which the intermediate coils are stored or Maebara which discloses only speed control.

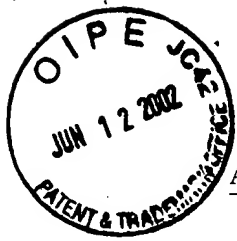
The application is now deemed to be in condition for allowance and notice to that effect is solicited.

Any additional fees or charges required at this time in connection with the application may be charged to our Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 03-2412.

Respectfully submitted,
COHEN, PONTANI, LIEBERMAN & PAVANE

By 
Thomas C. Pontani
Reg. No. 29,763
551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1210
New York, N.Y. 10176
(212) 687-2770

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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS SHOWING CHANGES

Amend the above-identified application as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS:

Cancel claims 10-11, without prejudice.

Amend claim 6 as follows:

6. (Amended) A process for producing hot-rolled steel strip from a continuously cast precursor strip, comprising the steps of:

receiving, at a first deformation stage having at least one roll stand, the continuous precursor strip of a complete casting sequence directly from a continuous casting plant in which the continuous precursor strip is produced;

rolling the continuous precursor strip through the first deformation stage to form a continuous intermediate strip;

coiling the continuous intermediate strip without subjecting said continuous intermediate strip to any cutting to form an intermediate coil having an intermediate coil weight comprising at least 40 tons;

uncoiling the continuous intermediate strip from the intermediate coil to supply a second deformation stage having at least one roll stand;

rolling the continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage to form a finished strip;

producing a plurality of finished coils from the finished strip by coiling the finished strip and severing the finished strip into sections having a desired finished coil weight after said step of rolling the continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage; and

changing the metallurgical characteristics of the continuous intermediate strip [and said step of rolling] by temperature control prior to said step of coiling the continuous intermediate strip and speed control of said continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage.